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SUBJECT: SEOUL - PRESS BULLETIN; July 28, 2009

TOP HEADLINES

Chosun Ilbo
Experts at Home and Abroad: "Quick Recovery
Possible for ROK Economy"

JoongAng Ilbo, Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun
Special Pardons Planned for 1.5 Million People
Convicted of Livelihood-Related Crimes

Dong-a Ilbo
Bill on New Administrative City Stuck in Limbo

Hankook Ilbo, Hankyoreh Shinmun
Labor Minister Says, "ROKG will Focus More
on Upgrading Irregular Workers to Regulars,"
Hinting at Possible Withdrawal of ROKG Proposal to Revise
Controversial Irregular Workers' Law

DOMESTIC DEVELOPMENTS

According to ruling circles, the ROKG will allow citizens to visit
North Korea by gradually lifting a travel ban imposed since North
Korea's second nuclear test in May. (Seoul)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

President Barack Obama, in a July 27 opening speech for the
U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington, said that
the U.S. will cooperate with China to dismantle North Korea's
nuclear program. (JoongAng, Segye, Seoul, MBC)

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in a July 26 interview with
NBC's "Meet the Press," said: "The Six-Party talk framework which
had everybody included is the appropriate way to engage with North
Korea," in apparent response to the North Korean ambassador to the
UN's recent press remarks that North Korea is "not against dialogue"
but that the Six-Party Talks are dead. (Chosun, Dong-a, Hankyoreh,
KBS)

North Korea's Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, in a July 27 statement, reiterated its position of not participating in the Six-Party Talks, arguing: "there is a specific and reserved form of dialogue that can address the current situation," which experts think means "bilateral talks with the U.S." (Chosun, Dong-a, Hankyoreh, KBS, YTN)

According to an ROKG official, there has been a flurry of behind-the-scenes negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea related to the possible release of the two U.S. journalists detained in the North. The issue is expected to be resolved soon. (JoongAng, Hankyoreh)

MEDIA ANALYSIS

-N. Korea

Most ROK media gave attention to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's July 26 interview with NBC's "Meet the Press," in which she said that "the Six-Party talk framework which had everybody included is the appropriate way to engage with North Korea." The media viewed Secretary Clinton's remark as a response to recent remarks by the North Korean ambassador to the UN that North Korea is not against dialogue but that the Six-Party Talks are dead.

Most media juxtaposed this comment by Secretary Clinton with a July 27 North Korean Foreign Ministry statement which reiterated the

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North's position of not participating in the Six-Party Talks, while arguing: "There is a specific and reserved form of dialogue that can address the current situation." Most media, citing experts, interpreted this to mean bilateral talks between North Korea and the U.S.

In a related development, conservative Chosun Ilbo quoted a diplomatic source as observing: "North Korea seems to be thinking that the U.S. will eventually agree to bilateral talks with the North because of the U.S. journalists detained in the North. Chosun also noted that the North's expression of willingness for dialogue was timed to coincide with the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue, which opened in Washington on July 27, and saw this as aimed at easing international sentiment by mollifying China.

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo and left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun carried inside-page reports quoting an ROKG official as saying that there has been a flurry of behind-the-scenes negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea pertaining to the detained U.S. journalists and that the issue is expected to be resolved soon.

U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue

The July 27-28 U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue in Washington received inside-page media attention, with most coverage focused on U.S.-China discussions on North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

President Barack Obama was quoted as saying at the opening of the talks: "Neither America nor China has an interest in a terrorist acquiring a bomb, or a nuclear arms race breaking out in East Asia. That is why we must continue our collaboration to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and make it clear to North Korea that the path to security and respect can be traveled if they meet their obligations."

Newspapers carried the following headlines: "Upgrade of U.S.-China Relations; U.S.-China Dialogue Elevated to Highest-level Dialogue with the Rise of China's Influence" (conservative Chosun Ilbo); "The 'Era of G-2' Opens; U.S., China to Discuss Pending Global Issues" (conservative Dong-a Ilbo); and "Obama: 'U.S. Expects China's Cooperation to Resolve the North Korean and Iranian Nuclear Issues'" (conservative Segye Ilbo)

NORTH KOREA DOES NOT POSE A THREAT
(Hankook Ilbo, July 28, page 30)

By Senior editorial writer Kang Byung-tae

During the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) last week, the United States and North Korea derided each other, as U.S. Secretary of State Clinton compared North Korea to "unruly teenagers," while North Korea called her a "primary schoolgirl." These attacks appear out of step with the recent moves by the ROK and the U.S. to lure North Korea back to talks through a comprehensive package.

Following exchanges of harsh rhetoric, North Korea's Ambassador to the UN seemed to take a conciliatory attitude saying that North Korea is not against negotiation. Conservatives in the ROK doubt whether North Korea has a genuine motive. However, North Korea, which criticized Clinton for her undiplomatic rhetoric, is suddenly calling for talks with the U.S. It is confusing whether the U.S. and North Korea are confronting each other or moving toward dialogue.

Clinton signals a change in U.S. North Korea policy

To get some clues amid this confusion, we need to examine the "unruly teenagers" remark. In an interview with ABC's "Good Morning America," Clinton said that the U.S. will not play into the North Korean regime's attention grab, which it has sought through nuclear

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tests and rocket launches. Clinton noted, "Maybe it's the mother in me or the experience that I've had with small children and unruly teenagers and people who are demanding attention. Don't give it to them. They don't deserve it."

China's official Xinhua news agency viewed this as a change in U.S. North Korea policy. The news agency gave attention to particular remarks by Clinton, who said, "North Korea's military doesn't pose a threat to us. We know our allies Japan and the ROK are very concerned. They watch what we watch and we know what's really going on." The U.S. had insisted that North Korea's nuclear and missile (ambitions) pose a threat to the U.S. However, the U.S. downplayed the (potential) threat from North Korea in the wake of its April rocket launch. Now the U.S. is proclaiming that the North is not presenting a threat (to the U.S.)

The reasons for change in the U.S. position and strategic judgment can be presumed as follows. The U.S. does not need to directly confront North Korea because it is not capable of posing a threat to the U.S. The U.S. can quell its allies' concerns by firmly guaranteeing a security commitment, including an extension of deterrence and the nuclear umbrella. Whatever North Korea says, it still would not dare wage a nuclear war against the U.S. Also, it is a suicidal act for North Korea to provoke Japan and the ROK beyond an "annoying" level. Therefore the North should change its attitude first. Otherwise, there will be no talks or negotiations.

Those who are doubtful of the U.S. position or are stuck to the resumption of the Six-Party Talks need to pay attention to advice from U.S. official circles. Richard Bush III, Director of the Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies at the Brookings Institution said at a House sub-committee hearing that the "game" in the North East Asia has changed, adding that since North Korea clarified it has no intention to pursue denuclearization, there is no ground for the Six-Party Talks to exist. He noted that North Korea will not change until the post-Kim Jong-il power succession is completed, anticipating that North Korea will have to endure sanctions and pressure to a considerable extent. This means that (the U.S.) needs to put stronger pressure on North Korea.

Even though we take this judgment into account, it is odd that the U.S. broke an old dogma or taboo, saying that North Korea does not pose a threat (to the U.S.) To strengthen pressure, it would be natural that the U.S. should stress threats from North Korea.

(Therefore,) some observers view that the U.S. is attempting to rectify relations with its allies, which were strained during the Bush Administration. The Bush Administration waged a war against terrorism and responded to North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs by putting too much emphasis on security threats against the U.S. According to those observers, the U.S. is making efforts to restore its influence by putting interests of its allies and stability of the international order before its own interests.

The ROK should face a change in the North Korean nuclear game

With this in mind, one could look at recent U.S. emphasis on a Five-Party meeting as a way to circumvent China, the host of the Six-Party Talks, and to increase its influence. Also, it seems that Clinton tacitly condoned Iran's nuclear development when she vowed to defend U.S. allies. This change (by the U.S., spelled out in these two examples) signals that the U.S. is back. The observers point out that this is the true nature of Obama's "tough and direct diplomacy," an approach that confronts reality.

Those who pay attention to this U.S. change even say that China may take military action to stabilize the order of North East Asia. We should not be swayed by these various observations. But whether conservatives or liberals, we should face the fact that the basic structure of the North Korean nuclear game has changed.

KOREAN WAR BEING FORGOTTEN IN ROK WHILE UNDER SPOTLIGHT IN U.S.
(JoongAng Ilbo, July 28, 2009, Page 34)

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U.S. President Barack Obama proclaimed July 27 as "National Korean War Veterans Armistice Day" and ordered all federal departments and agencies to fly the U.S. flag at half-staff. The U.S. Congress also recently passed legislation called the Korean War Veterans Recognition Act. The legislation is reportedly designed to express respect and appreciation for Korean War veterans who lost their lives. While honoring the great souls of the veterans who died for a faraway foreign country - the ROK - we think about whether we have remembered their spirit of sacrifice properly.

The U.S. has high regard for its soldiers who lost their lives in fighting for their nation. The U.S. has made every effort to find the remains of U.S. soldiers for decades. At the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C., there is the dedication stone, which reads, "Our nation honors her sons and daughters who answered the call to defend a country they never knew and a people they never met."

Looking at the U.S. society's honorable treatment of Korean War veterans, we reflect on our perception of the Korean War. According to many opinion surveys, including the one conducted by the Ministry of Public Administration and Security, 56.6 percent of respondents in their 20s said that they do not know when the Korean War broke out. It was also discovered that more than half of middle and high school students do not know about North Korea's invasion of the ROK.

About 34 percent of Korea Military Academy freshmen even chose the U.S. as a main enemy of the ROK. So far, what has happened at schools makes us frustrated. We should immediately correct this misleading perception of history.

We cannot, of course, stay in the memory of the war forever. If North Korea truly wants to coexist with us, we should accept it. However, we should not forget the truth about the Korean War. History shows that those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it. It has been a long time since the Soviet Union unveiled a document saying that the North started the Korean War. Still, distorted arguments are prevalent in the ROK, and people are forgetting the Korean War. Next year will mark the 60th anniversary of the beginning of the Korean War. Many events are seemingly being prepared to put the spotlight on the Korean War, but above all, efforts must be focused on teaching the growing generation the accurate facts of the Korean War.

FEATURES

"ABOUT 70 TO 80 PERCENT PROGRESS MADE IN NEGOTIATIONS OVER RELEASE OF TWO U.S. JOURNALISTS"

(JoongAng Ilbo, July 28, 2009, Page 6)

By Reporter Ye Young-joon

While North Korea publicly expresses hope for direct talks with the U.S. day after day, speculation has arisen that negotiations over the release of the two U.S. female journalists detained in North Korea may lead to the resumption of U.S.-North Korea dialogue. An ROKG official said on July 27, "Since behind-the-scenes contact between the U.S. and North Korea over the issue of the female journalists is making rapid progress, the issue is expected to be resolved soon." Another high-ranking source even noted, "The negotiations saw 70 to 80 percent progress." The ROKG official added, "Pyongyang is showing sincerity in consultations through the New York channel. We need to take note that the USG recently used the word 'amnesty' for the journalists." Winning Pyongyang's "amnesty" of the journalists means that (the U.S.) acknowledges North Korea's legal system and the outcome of its trial for the journalists. The recognition of the legal system is one of the demands from Pyongyang.

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STEPHENS